

**What Is Claimed Is:**

1. A method of adapting a data link user for a communication protocol, comprising:
  - 5 at a data link provider, receiving from a data link user through an interface defined between the data link provider and the data link user, a first request to identify a medium access control type supported by the data link provider;  
receiving at the data link provider a second request to identify a communication protocol supported by the data link provider; and
  - 10 in response to said second request, enabling the data link user to parse the communication protocol.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
in response to said first request, indicating to the data link user that said  
15 communication protocol is a protocol not registered with the interface.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein said enabling comprises:  
sending the data link user an XML (Extensible Markup Language)  
document describing said format.  
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4. The method of claim 1, wherein said enabling comprises:  
sending the data link user a set of data describing said format.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein said enabling comprises:  
25 making available to the data link user a set of processor executable instructions for parsing said format.

6. A computer readable storage medium storing instructions that, when executed by a computer, cause the computer to perform a method of adapting a data link user for a communication protocol, the method comprising:

at a data link provider, receiving from a data link user through an interface  
5 defined between the data link provider and the data link user, a first request to identify a medium access control type supported by the data link provider;  
receiving at the data link provider a second request to identify a communication protocol supported by the data link provider; and  
in response to said second request, enabling the data link user to parse the  
10 communication protocol.

7. A method of adapting to a communication protocol supported by a data link provider, comprising:

at a data link user, through an interface defined between the data link user  
15 and a data link provider, requesting the data link provider to identify a medium access control type supported by the data link provider;

at the data link user, requesting the data link provider to identify a communication protocol supported by the data link provider; and  
receiving a description of the format of the communication protocol from  
20 the data link provider.

8. The method of claim 7, further comprising:

receiving at the data link user, in response to said request to identify a medium access control type, an indication that said medium access control type is  
25 not one of a predetermined set of medium access control types registered with the interface.

9. The method of claim 7, wherein said receiving comprises:  
receiving an XML (Extensible Markup Language) document describing  
said format.

5 10. The method of claim 7, wherein said receiving comprises:  
receiving a set of data describing said format.

10 11. The method of claim 7, wherein said receiving comprises:  
receiving access to a set of processor executable instructions for parsing  
said communication protocol.

15 12. A computer readable storage medium storing instructions that,  
when executed by a computer, cause the computer to perform a method of  
adapting to a communication protocol supported by a data link provider, the  
method comprising:

at a data link user, through an interface defined between the data link user  
and a data link provider, requesting the data link provider to identify a medium  
access control type supported by the data link provider;

20 at the data link user, requesting the data link provider to identify a  
communication protocol supported by the data link provider; and  
receiving a description of the format of the communication protocol from  
the data link provider.

25 13. A method of adapting a data link user for a communication  
protocol supported by a data link provider, wherein the data link user and data link  
provider communicate via an interface, comprising:

at the data link user, issuing a first request to the data link provider to

identify a medium access control type supported by the data link provider;

at the data link provider, sending to the data link user a first response comprising an indication that the medium access control type is unknown to the interface;

5 at the data link user, issuing a second request to the data link provider to identify a communication protocol supported by the data link provider for the medium access control type; and

at the data link provider, sending to the data link user a second response enabling the data link user to parse the communication protocol.

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14. The method of claim 13, wherein:

said first request comprises the DLPI (Data Link Provider Interface) primitive DL\_INFO\_REQ; and

15 said first response comprises the DLPI primitive DL\_INFO\_ACK with the parameter dl\_mac\_type having the value DL\_OTHER.

15. The method of claim 13, wherein said second response comprises an XML (Extensible Markup Language) document describing a format of the communication protocol.

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16. The method of claim 13, wherein said second response comprises a set of data describing a format of the communication protocol.

25 17. The method of claim 13, wherein said second response comprises a set of processor executable instructions for parsing the communication protocol.

18. The method of claim 13, wherein said second response comprises

access to a set of processor executable instructions, on the data link provider, for parsing the communication protocol.

19. A computer readable storage medium storing instructions that,  
5 when executed by a computer, cause the computer to perform a method of adapting a data link user for a communication protocol supported by a data link provider, wherein the data link user and data link provider communicate via an interface, the method comprising:

10 at the data link user, issuing a first request to the data link provider to identify a medium access control type supported by the data link provider;  
at the data link provider, sending to the data link user a first response comprising an indication that the medium access control type is unknown to the interface;  
15 at the data link user, issuing a second request to the data link provider to identify a communication protocol supported by the data link provider for the medium access control type; and  
at the data link provider, sending to the data link user a second response enabling the data link user to parse the communication protocol.

20 20. A system for adapting a data link user for a communication protocol supported by data link user, comprising:

a data link provider configured to provide data link layer services;  
a data link user configured to access said data link services; and  
an extended implementation of DLPI (Data Link Provider Interface), in  
25 which:

said data link user is configured to request said data link provider  
identify a communication protocol supported by the data link provider;

and

said data link provider is configured to offer said data link user, in response to said request, information for parsing the communication protocol.

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21. The system of claim 20, wherein said data link provider comprises a device driver for a communication interface device.

10 22. The system of claim 20, wherein said data link user comprises a snoop utility for parsing a communication received by said data link provider.

15 23. The system of claim 20, wherein said information offered by said data link provider comprises an XML (Extensible Markup Language) document describing a format of the communication protocol.

24. The system of claim 20, wherein said information offered by said data link provider comprises a set of data describing a format of the communication protocol.

20 25. The system of claim 20, wherein said information offered by said data link provider comprises a set of processor executable instructions for parsing the communication protocol.

25 26. The system of claim 20, wherein said information offered by said data link provider enables said data link user to access, on said data link provider, a set of processor executable instructions for parsing the communication protocol.